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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999

Letter dated 17 February 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 29 December 1998, the newspaper *The Washington Times* published an article on the negotiations on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 which included statements by members of the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations. These statements should be carefully studied, given the influence of public opinion in the United States on the Government's decisions and on the conditions which Congress constantly places on its compliance with the country's financial obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

These statements, particularly the statement by Mr. Richard Sklar, also merit a response because they are full of mistakes and inaccuracies, and reflect a total ignorance of the negotiations in which only representatives of regional groups and certain countries, which on that occasion did not include Cuba, participated.

Despite the political epithets directed at my Government by this official, I would prefer to focus, in view of their importance, on administrative and budgetary matters.

We wonder which is the truly reactionary and irrational State, the one that, inspired by the principles and purposes set out in the Charter and endorsed in successive General Assembly resolutions, participates in the negotiations in order to ensure that the Organization receives the resources it needs for its orderly and rational functioning and the full implementation of mandated activities, or the one that tries to push its internal policy decisions, misuse procedures and violate General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 41/213, in order to impose specific budgetary caps and zero-growth policies.

Such policies have led to the adoption of resolutions like 50/214, whose negative impact on the execution of United Nations activities and on the morale of its principal resource, the staff, are well known.

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What can one call a State that, although the major contributor, makes arbitrary budget cuts when the conditions imposed by its Congress are not met?

Fortunately, most Member States meet their financial obligations responsibly and recognize that decisions of their parliaments can only be implemented internally; otherwise you, Sir, would be faced with total chaos while trying to implement the decisions of 185 legislative bodies.

Mr. Sklar's accusation that countries "who don't pay" (a reference that included Cuba) dominated the negotiating exercise is erroneous. My Government's pattern of payments clearly reflects its unshakable determination to meet its budgetary obligations despite the extraordinary difficulties it is facing as a result of the rigid, irrational and inhuman economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America on Cuba for more than three long decades.

If the topic is non-payment, the example that should be cited is in fact the United States of America, which at the end of 1998 owed the Organization 1,294,163,678 United States dollars, or 63.72 per cent of all arrears.

The aforementioned article states that a United Nations official had promised the United States representative on the Fifth Committee that he would reduce the budget by another several million dollars to ensure zero growth. My Government would prefer not to believe such reports but to reiterate its position that the actions of the Secretariat must be entirely guided by the decisions of the General Assembly.

We hope that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 coincides with the figure approved in the budget outline. Proposing lower amounts would give an extremely negative signal to Member States in particular and to the international community in general, and would cast doubt on the principle of the impartiality of the Secretariat as well as on the different functions and prerogatives of the two principal bodies.

Allow me to reiterate that my Government will continue to participate constructively in the negotiations on the budget and the intergovernmental debate on those proposals of your reform programme that call for a decision by the General Assembly.

Lastly, I should like to request you to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 112 and 113.

In conveying to you once again my Government's ongoing commitment to the United Nations and our support for your efforts to reform the Organization so that it becomes more efficient and stronger, I would ask you also to accept the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Rafael **Dausá Céspedes**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.